

Section 4: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a welcoming environment?

A welcoming environment is a space where “people can find themselves represented and reflected and where they understand that all people are treated with dignity and respect.” Research shows that when people do not feel welcome and/or safe accessing health services, they will put off or avoid treatment altogether. Culturally safe and welcoming environments are an important part of achieving health equity.

What is my role in creating a welcoming environment?

There are multiple levels of responsibility to creating a welcoming environment: the system level (which encompasses larger actions taken by organizations, like this toolkit, offering training, creating human resource policies that enhance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, hiring policies that promote diverse hiring, etc.,).

Our ultimate goal is spaces where all people feel:

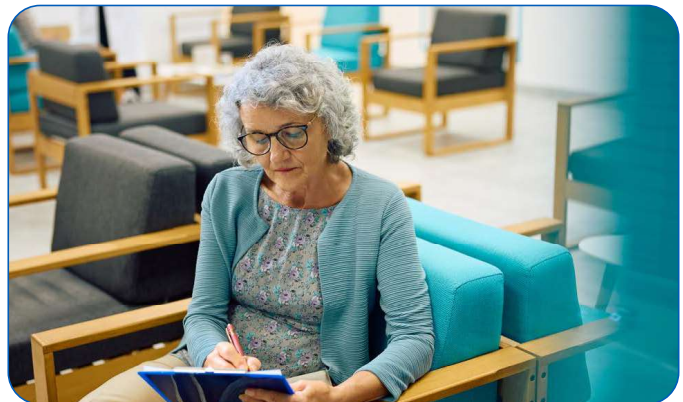
- Seen
- Heard
- Respected
- Accepted
- Like they're an active part in the decision-making process
- That they can access the facility without barriers
- Confident in what to expect when accessing healthcare services
- Like they understand the information being requested of them and provided to them.

On the individual level, you should seek out training related to health equity, diversity and inclusion, cultural safety, and other related concepts when you are able. Making yourself aware of and reading resources like the Welcoming Spaces toolkit is another way to take individual action towards an inclusive and welcoming environment. Reflecting on your own background, unconscious biases, and role in promoting inclusion and accessibility are also good practices.

What is cultural safety?

Cultural safety is a term that was created in Indigenous health contexts and refers to “An outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care”.

An important part of cultural safety is cultural humility, which is defined as “a lifelong journey of self-reflection and learning.



It involves listening without judgement and being open to learning from and about others. It involves learning about our own culture and our biases. Cultural humility is a building block for cultural safety. It is an overarching principle that is threaded through our learning and acts as the process by which change can occur.”³⁵

What is trauma-informed care?

Trauma-informed approaches, also known as trauma-and-violence informed approaches, “are policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence”.

“Trauma and violence-informed approaches... are based on the following key policy and practice principles:

1. Understand trauma and violence, and their impacts on peoples’ lives and behaviours
2. Create emotionally and physically safe environments
3. Foster opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection
4. Provide a strengths-based and capacity-building approach to support client coping and resilience.³⁶”

Trauma-informed approaches and space design contribute to welcoming environments by helping to increase emotional and physical safety and trust building with clients.

How do I assess whether our space is welcoming for everyone?

You can refer to the *space assessment tools* in Section 2 of this toolkit. If you would like to someone to come and assess your space and work with you to make

enhancements, please reach out to the Women and Gender Diverse People’s Health Section at healthhub@gov.pe.ca

Should I ask a client about their gender identity? If so, how?

Yes. If possible, let the client self-identify on an intake form or at intake. Ask two questions: 1) what is your gender? and 2) what was your sex assigned at birth? (If it is required in a healthcare context, otherwise this second question is likely not necessary).

- It is also good practice to ask on an intake form or at intake if they have a name that they use that is different from their legal name on their health card. Ensure that the client is referred to by their preferred name throughout their visit.
- Also ask them for their pronouns at intake. Ensure that all staff use the correct pronouns for the client. Introducing yourself with your pronouns can also help to build trust.
- Having artwork and signage that indicate that the client is in a welcoming and affirming space will help build trust with gender diverse clients.
- Note: Ask about any transition-related surgeries only if they are relevant to the patient’s current visit. Invasive questions about anatomy should be avoided unless it directly pertains to the current issue or visit.



³⁵<https://www.indigenoushealthnh.ca/cultural-safety#cultural-humility>

³⁶<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html>

What should I do if someone is upset or resistant when they are asked for their pronouns?

Some people may not feel comfortable sharing their pronouns with you, and that is okay. Some people may not be comfortable because they don't feel safe and have had bad experiences in the past when sharing their pronouns, while others may not be comfortable because it is not something they understand or are familiar with. As Pride Health Nova Scotia notes, "While there are some people that may be confused or even offended by being asked, it's important to remember that there are people who will feel safer receiving care from you because you asked!"

If someone gets upset about being asked for their pronouns, you could say something like: "I ask everyone about their pronouns to make sure that I'm referring to people the way they want to be referred to."

What is a psychologically safe workplace?

As described in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, "The vision for a psychologically healthy and safe workplace is one that actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health, including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways, and promotes psychological well-being." According to the Standard, psychologically safe workplaces are based on "mutually respectful relationships among the organization, its management, its workers, and worker representatives."

Many employers are working towards creating more psychologically safe workplaces, including the PEI Public Service Commission. We all contribute to creating psychologically safe workplaces. To find more resources, visit the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

What should I do if I feel like I experienced discrimination as an employee?

Based on the Public Service Commission's **Respectful Workplace Policy**, there are several ways that you can approach the situation.

The PSC policy encourages addressing the situation through open communication in a fair and respectful manner. If it safe to do so and you feel comfortable, you can speak directly to the person and ask them to stop the behaviour(s). If you do not feel comfortable or safe, you can discuss the situation with your supervisor.

Supports are available through your workplace, such as the Public Service Commission's **Respectful Workplace Policy**, Employee Assistance Program, Human Resources, or a union representative.



Both PSC and Health PEI have formal complaint processes, outlined in the respective policies, if informal methods do not resolve the issue.

What should I do if I feel like I experienced discrimination as a member of the public?

If you are a member of the public, **this webpage offers a guide to the rights and responsibilities of patients** and provides a form to make a complaint.

Where do I go if I have more questions about the Welcoming Spaces toolkit?

The Welcoming Spaces toolkit was created by the Women and Gender Diverse People's Health Section in the Department of Health and Wellness. For more information, you can contact the Health Diversity and Inclusion Specialist at healthhub@gov.pe.ca



Acknowledgments

Thank you to the staff at the Department of Health and Wellness and Health PEI for generously providing their expertise and feedback on this document.

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& GENDER
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